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A

Kind Caution

TO

WATERMEN,

And ſuch as go upon the

RIVER.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A Kind CAUTION to Watermen, &c.

IT has been a matter of juſt grief and ſorrow to good Men in all Ages, to ſee Religion and Virtue loſe ground, and Vice and Wickedneſs roſper in the World; 'twas this, which ade the Prophet *Jeremy* break out into hat ſorrowful Wiſh, *Oh that my Head ere Waters, and my Eyes a Fountain of ars, that I might Weep Day and Night.* nd for the ſame reaſon it was, that the oly Pſalmiſt was a Man of ſuch exceſſive Grief. *Rivers of Waters*, ſays he, *run down my Eyes becauſe Men keep not thy Law.* It is indeed a Melancholy reflection to conſider, how Iniquity abounds and ſpreads it ſelf every where, what multitudes of People are wallowing in their Sins, thundring out their Oaths and Curſes, and even as it were bidding defiance to the God that made them.

What Numbers of Lewd and Diſſo-lute Perſons are to be ſeen in our Streets and eſpecially about the Play-Houſes thoſe Nurſeries of Wickedneſs and De-bauchery, to conſider all this, (I ſay,) and to conſider it ſeriouſly, muſt needs fill the Mind of any one, that has the leaſt Zeal for the glory of God and the bene-fit of Mankind, with a juſt concern and trouble.

It muſt indeed be own'd, that every view a Man takes of the World does not afford him ſo uncomfortable a proſpect; there are many bright Souls to be ſeen that ſhine like Stars in a dark Night; Men eminent for Piety and Virtue, that are not only good themſelves, but en-deavour to make others ſo too; many of which have form'd themſelves into Re-ligious Societies, that ſo by their United Strength, they might be the better able to ſtop that torrent of Wickedneſs which is broke in upon us, and God be thank'd their Labours have not been altogether in vain; but though this be true, yet it muſt be own'd, that Vice and Irreligion ſtill appear open and barefac'd, for the truth of which, I dare appeal to thoſe who are converſant at *Tunbridge*, *Epſom*, the *Bath*, and other places of publick Re-

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ſort, and particularly at the Play-Houſes, where the Devil ſeems to have ſet up his Standard, and Proclaim'd War againſt all that is ſerious.

Among the many Inſtances of this kind, that might be nam'd, there is none perhaps is a greater Evidence of the Corruption of the Age, than that ſcandalous liberty, which is taken upon the Water; a liberty ſo contrary to good Manners, and to the Precepts of our holy Religion, that I cannot but wonder, it has been ſo little taken notice of; how far the Gentlemen of the Reformation Society have gon in endeavouring to ſuppreſs ſo wicked a Practice, I know not, but I don't remember to have met with any thing that has been written upon that Subject, though I think it very well deſerves a particular Conſideration.

Indeed 'tis ſomewhat ſtrange, that when ſo many Light-Houſes, and other cautionary Marks have been ſet up to adverti ſe Men of the Rocks and dangerous Shallows of the Seas, no one ſhould have yet endeavour'd to caution Men againſt the dangers of the River *Thames*, where there are Rocks much more fatal, upon which Men are continually ſplitting, and making Shipwrack, not of their Veſſels,

but of what is much more valuable, a good Conſcience.

Had this been done betimes, I am perſwaded, we ſhould never have heard upon the *Thames*, what we daily now do, (at leaſt not ſo frequently) Men bellowing out their lewd and filthy Jeſts, treating one another with all the opprobious Language their Wit can invent, and under the pretence of being but in jeſt all the while, uttering thoſe things, that are not fit to be nam'd among Chriſtians: Had this abuſe, I ſay, been checkt in the beginning, 'tis hardly poſſible, it ſhould ever have got to ſuch a Head, as we now ſee it is; and what advances it may ſtill make, is hard to ſay; indeed when one conſiders, how long this wicked Cuſtom has prevail'd, and how generally 'tis us'd, not only by the Looſe and Vain, but even by ſome, that in other things pretend to Seriouſneſs and Sobriety: When one ſees Watermen looking upon it as part of their Profeſſion, and teaching it their Apprentices, as they do their Trade, a Man would be tempted to deſpair of ſeeing a Remedy to ſo growing an Evil, and conſequently diſcourag'd from endeavouring to cure it; but yet methinks there is ſomething

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ſo very Charitable in the Attempt, that I was willing to offer my Thoughts upon this occaſion.

In the firſt place then, I would deſire thoſe, that take a liberty (when upon the Water) of playing the Buffoon, and uſing obſcene and ſcurrilous Language, to conſider, how ſcandalous a Practice this is in a Chriſtian Country, how offenſive to chaſt Ears, and how contrary to that Religion, which teaches us, not to ſuffer any *corrupt Communication to proceed out of our Mouths, but that which is good to the uſe of Edifying, that it may miniſter Grace unto the Hearers*, Eph. 4. 29. To put away all *Evil-ſpeaking*, all *Filthineſs, fooliſh talking and jeſting, which are not convenient*. Ver. 31. *To be holy in all manner of Converſation*. Eph. 5. 3. And in ſhort, *To abſtain from all appearance of Evil*, 1 Pet. 1. 15. How odious this muſt needs be in the Sight of that God, who is a Lover of Purity and Holineſs, and what Account they will be able one Day to give of all their fooliſh and filthy Jeſts, their ſcurrilous Railery, and opprobious Language. Do they think it will then ſuffice to ſay, that all this was but in Jeſt, and only done in a place, where ſuch libertys were allow'd by a general

neral Conſent, and that in all other Places they kept their Tongues as with a Bridle, and reſtrain'd them from running into ſuch Exceſſes; alas! theſe Excuſes will then be in vain; we may deceive our ſelves, but God will not be mock'd: He expects there ſhould be an Uniformity in our Practice, and that our Words as well as Actions ſhould every where be ſeaſon'd with Virtue and Religion; no Place is without the Limits of his Sovereignty, nor can any Conſent, no not that of the whole World (if 'twere poſſible to be had) diſpenſe with the obligation of his Laws: If 'tis our Duty to refrain from Evil-ſpeaking and Slandering, from talking Lewdly and Obſcenely, and from abuſing and vilifying our Neighbour, when in all other places, it will undoubtedly be ſo too, whenever we are upon the *Thames* or any other River. But ſuppoſe for once, ſuch a freedom were allowable upon the Water; yet who can ſay, that the ill Example he there gives, ſhall go no farther, and that others ſeeing the Liberty that is taken upon the *Thames*, will not from thence be encourag'd to do the ſame thing elſewhere, and having firſt receiv'd the Infection there, carry the

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Contagion home to their own Houſes. Vice is of a very prolifick nature, when once it gets vent, 'tis like Fire pent up in a hollow place, which no ſooner burſts out, but immediately diſſipates it ſelf, and does miſchief all about it.

Let me then perſwade every one, that has been guilty of ſo wicked a practice, not only to reform themſelves, but to do all, that in them lies, to prevent it in others, to give no Countenance to thoſe, who are reſolv'd to perſiſt in it, and where they can make uſe of their Influence and Authority, (as thoſe to be ſure may, upon whom any Waterman has a dependance) to exert it, in ſuppreſſing ſuch a ſcandalous Cuſtom; and this they may eaſily do, by refuſing to employ any one that is guilty of theſe abuſes; and whenever their Occaſions call 'em to go by Water, inſtead of ſpending that time like Buffoons and merry Andrews, they would do well to employ it in uſeful and profitable Diſcourſes, or (if alone) in Contemplating the Works of Providence, in Conſidering the uſefulneſs of that River, upon which they are, and the

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great Goodneſs of God in ordering every thing ſo much for the Profit, as well as Pleaſure of Man.

Theſe are ſome of thoſe Thoughts, which one would think ſhould naturally occur to every one, that paſſes to and fro upon the *Thames*; and how much more entertaining would this be, than all that filthy Wit and Railery, which a Man is forc'd to encounter, that will go upon the *Thames*.

In the next Place, I would perſwade thoſe Men, whoſe very livelihood is got by their Employments upon the Water, to conſider with themſelves, what a ſhameful return they make to God, when at the ſame time that he is proſpering their Labours, they are abuſing his Name, vilifying their Neighbour, and uſing all manner of filthy and obſcene Language.

Do they think, there is any thing peculiar in their Profeſſion to give 'em a liberty thus to diſhonour God? Or that any thing is allowable in them, that would not be ſo in others? Do they believe that foul Language, and bawdy Jeſts, is leſs a Crime in them than in other People? One would think

think indeed they entertain'd such an Opinion, or else 'tis hardly possible so wicked a Custom should so universally prevail among them; and yet on the other hand 'tis difficult to be accounted for, how a Man that thinks at all, should think so absurdly; but in truth what absurdities will not a Man fall into, when once he ventures to deviate from the Laws and Precepts of the Gospel. What shall I say then to dissuade these Men from a Practice so vile and Scandalous, but to desire 'em to remember, that there will come a Day, wherein God will judge the World, and expect an Account of every wicked Word; and how will they then wish, that instead of prostituting their Tongues to such base purposes, they had employ'd them for the Honour of God, and the benefit of their Neighbours; and that instead of Teaching their Children and Servants foul and obscene Language, they had set before them the Example of a virtuous and sober Conversation, and had Instructed them in their Duty both to God and Man; in short, they will then lament (O that they would be perswaded to do it now) their

their having made their Tongues t
Instruments of so much mischief, th
having utter'd such numberless Words
will not say, to no purpose, but which
much worse, to a very wicked one)
the Dishonour of God, the Abuse of the
Neighbour, and the Corrupting
Minds both of themselves and others.

These are serious and import
Truths, and worthy to be consid
by all those, who are guilty of
Crimes here complain'd of; and wou
to God they would so attend to
force of them, as to be convinc'd h
much 'tis their Duty to keep that
ruly Member the Tongue, within
bounds of Virtue and Religion,
to forsake a Custom so very offen
to all good Men, as well as highly
pleasing to Almighty God.

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